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Exercise Is Good for You, But it Won't Cut Hot Flashes

CLEVELAND, Ohio (July 31, 2013)—Exercise has proven health benefits, but easing hot flashes isn't one of them. After participating in a 12-week aerobic exercise program, sedentary women with frequent hot flashes had no fewer or less bothersome hot flashes than a control group. This randomized, controlled study from the MsFLASH Research Network was published today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society.

The 248 women in the trial were either approaching menopause or were postmenopausal; 142 of them continued to go about their usual activities, and 106 participated in aerobic exercise training three times a week for 12 weeks at a fitness center. All the women kept daily diaries on their hot flashes and night sweats and on how well they slept and also completed questionnaires about insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

Although exercise had small positive effects on sleep quality, insomnia, and depression, it had no significant effect on hot flashes for the women overall. Race and initial fitness did make some difference, however. White women in the exercise program did show improvement in their hot flashes compared with white women who maintained their usual activity level, but there was no similar difference among African-American women. Also, women who were more fit to begin with had greater improvement in their hot flashes with exercise.

The study helps to settle a debate about the effect of exercise on hot flashes. Previous studies have been inconsistent, but this study corroborates a recent Cochrane review on the topic, which concluded that there was no evidence to support the use of exercise as an effective treatment for hot flashes and night sweats.

“Midlife women cannot expect exercise to relieve [hot flashes and night sweats] but may reasonably expect it to improve how they feel and their overall health,” said the investigators.

The National Institutes of Health established the MsFLASH (Menopause Strategies: Finding Lasting Answers for Symptoms and Health) Research Network to study promising treatments for the most common symptoms of menopause. This study was funded and supported by the National Institute on Aging in collaboration with the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and

Development, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and the Office of Research and Women's Health. At the Indiana University site, the project was funded in part by the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute, which is funded in part by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, National Center for Research Resources, Clinical and Translational Sciences Award.

The study will be published in the April 2014 print edition of *Menopause*.

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Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.